

January 23, 2020

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky, Chairwoman  
Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Consumer Protection & Commerce  
United States House of Representatives  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building - Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers, Ranking Member  
Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Consumer Protection & Commerce  
United States House of Representatives  
2322 Rayburn House Office Building - Washington, D.C. 20515



Dear Chairwoman Schakowsky and Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers:

**RE: Opposition to H.R. 1754 -Horseracing Integrity Act - as it threatens a historical Washington Industry with an annual total direct and indirect \$ 221 MILLION economic contribution to Washington State, eliminating thousands of working class jobs and threatens the health of our beloved equine athletes.**

Today, I write to you on behalf the thousands of owners, trainers, grooms, exercise riders, breeding farm owners, hay/ grain farmers, veterinarians, tack and supply vendors and their many employees who have a huge investment in or depend on the Washington Horse Racing Industry for their livelihood.

**Horse Racing has faced some daunting obstacles, however none greater than what is proposed via HR 1754 – The Horseracing Integrity Act of 2019. The proponents of the Bill are the “Kings of the Sport” and have little regard for Washington Horse Racing and the more “common” horses which run here. The majority of horsemen and women around the country oppose HR 1754.**

The Washington Horseman's Benevolent and Protective Association (WHBPA) represents the horse owners and trainers who participate in horseracing at Emerald Downs. Our President, Board of Directors, members, and staff share a commitment to the welfare of our equine athletes and the people that work with these horses daily. The nearly 1500 WHBPA members reside or work around the entire State. **As a whole, we are very concerned about, and have strong opposition towards H.R. 1754 the Horseracing Integrity Act of 2019.** If enacted H.R. 1754 would strip authority from our State Racing Commission and create a new, duplicative regulatory bureaucracy at the federal level. Moreover, this new bureaucracy will create a new structure of fees and taxes to cover some of the federal costs of the new regulatory structure, and those fees and taxes would come from horse owners and the industry at-large.

Unlike the elite tracks around the country (with multi million dollar horses or alternate sources of gaming to subsidize their purses), our member's own “blue collar horses” and prize money that has seen little increase over the past thirty years, yet the economic impact to the state has not faltered. With no viable funding mechanism included in the legislation, there is strong evidence that with the ever increasing costs associated with racing and the resulting additional fees and/or taxes from passage of this Bill, many of our members and the racetrack may be forced out of business. Thousands of jobs, supported by horse racing will be lost. Many of the employees have no directly transferable skills to other industries and will need public assistance.

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~ Horsemen Helping Horsemen ~

The impact of horseracing in Washington goes far beyond the racetrack venue. According to a recent American Horse Council economic impact study, the horse racing sector contributes some \$36 billion annually to the National economy and provides about 240,000 direct jobs. In Washington State, there is an annual investment of over \$160 million and over \$63 million in annual cash outflow. Over \$31 million is attributed to Washingtonian salaries and wages.

Additionally H.R. 1754 also seeks to ban the choice to administer the therapeutic medication Lasix, or Furosemide on the day of the race. This medication is the only medication used in horses to control or prevent Exercise Induced Pulmonary Hemorrhages (EIPH). Further unlike human Olympic or Pro athletes, Lasix is the only medication allowed at effective levels in a horse on race day. Research tells us almost all horses experience an EIPH episode during intense exercise (such as during competitive events like races) and published scientific research has shown Lasix to be an effective preventative treatment for “bleeding” in the lungs of horses. This is the reason its use is recognized by the American Veterinary Medical Association, the American Association of Equine Practitioners, and the North American Association of Racetrack Veterinarians as being safe and effective. **These veterinary leadership organizations believe the use of Lasix to treat EIPH is in the best interests of health and welfare for our equine athletes.**

The measures set forth in this bill will add unnecessary regulatory and financial burdens which will harm state and local economies which depend on the Horse Racing Industry. The Bill seemingly disregards science and veterinary recommendations which secure the health of horses. Therefore, although you are listed as a sponsor, we urge you to not support the Horseracing Integrity Act.

I stand ready to discuss this matter with you at any time. Please feel free to reach out to us for any additional information that you may require.

Sincerely,



MaryAnn O'Connell  
Executive Director



4 Generations-Reside at our 30 Acre Thoroughbred Training Center in the Kent Valley. The farm was homesteaded by the OConnells in 1872 and today is surrounded by industry.

